

November 25, 2014

Jo Ann Isken, Commission Chair
Instructional Quality Commission
1430 N Street, Suite #5111
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Chairwoman Isken:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the over 100,000 member educators of the California Federation of Teachers (CFT) in order to provide formal feedback on the draft History-Social Science Framework. We applaud the Instructional Quality Commission and the California Department of Education for the improvements they have made to the framework. However, we believe that there are still several improvements that need to be made to ensure that California's students understand the important historical events that shaped our world.

The California Federation of Teachers convened a team of practicing educators to review the draft History-Social Science Framework, and their recommendations are included below.

1. In regards to the 10th grade section of the framework, our members are concerned about the overall focus on Europe and the United States. Most of this section focuses on Western Civilization, and when developing parts of the world are mentioned (i.e., Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia), it is in reference to European and American colonization and decolonization of these regions. There is little mention of the cultures and accomplishments of these regions. This limited focus inadvertently sends the message to students that Europeans and Americans are important and powerful and that the rest of the world is not. This is an unfortunate message to send to impressionable adolescents and leaves students with an incomplete view of world events and cultures.
2. Our team of educators who critiqued the framework have similar problems with the 11th grade section of the framework for U.S. History (particularly section 11.3) dedicated to the influence of religion, in particular Christianity, on American history. Although they understand that this is an important topic that should be addressed throughout the course in different time periods of U.S. History, they wonder why topics like the Second Great Awakening earn

a prominent place in this section. With the heavy emphasis on Christianity in section 11.3, there is little mention of the other religions that play a role in U.S. history. Although 11.3.3 mentions religious discrimination against Mormons and Jews, there is no mention of discrimination against Muslims in the U.S. after the September 11th terrorist attack on the World Trade Center.

3. In section 11.10, our team firmly believes that there needs to be a section addressing the civil rights movement for the LGBT community. It is 2014; gay marriage is legal in California, and our nationwide debate on gay rights is moving in the direction of equality for all. The History-Social Science Framework must not ignore this important part of our community. It is important for young people to talk about sexual orientation so that they all become comfortable with the issues that have faced the LGBT community. It is also important that vulnerable LGBT students can learn about the historical struggles of their community and not feel ignored by their own school system.
4. Our team of educators was also concerned about section 11.4. They feel like it is more appropriate for the U.S. to be described as an “imperial power” instead of a “world power” to allow for a different interpretation. “World power” sends the message that the U.S. was justified in taking over and dominating other civilizations and that the U.S. is the dominant nation in the world, while the term “imperial” at least opens up the discussion for consequences surrounding “imperialism.” It is crucial that students understand that being a “world power” brings responsibilities and burdens to the U.S. and social, economic and political strife to other regions of the world.
5. Additionally, the California Federation of Teachers believes that the framework should include a Labor Studies elective. Due to the very limited attention to the role and contributions of workers and the labor movement in the History-Social Science Content Standards (just seven specific references in all of grades K-12), we recommend that the framework also include a Labor Studies elective.
6. Finally, the use of the term “human capital” should be deleted from the framework throughout. While it is a term widely used in the world of business, it is not an appropriate substitute for conveying the skills, education, training and knowledge that inform labor in the modern workplace. The term “human capital” denigrates the importance of labor. It is an abstraction, and thus our students would be better served by using the concrete substitution, as appropriate in the context, of “skills,” “education” and “training.”

In closing, the California Federation of Teachers would like to thank the members of the Instructional Quality Commission for allowing us to provide important input into the development of the California History-Social Science Framework. It is our hope that you will seriously consider the recommended changes that we have put forth in this letter. We are committed to making sure that our students have the opportunity to

learn important historical concepts while at the same time learning the skills they need to be successful and contributing citizens in the 21st century.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Rapp", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ron Rapp
Legislative Representative

RR/jc:opeiu29:afl-cio

cc: Tom Torlakson, State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Dr. Michael Kirst, President, State Board of Education
Karen Stapf Walters, Executive Director, State Board of Education
Louis "Bill" Honig, Vice Chair, Instructional Quality Commission
Thomas Adams, Executive Director, Instructional Quality Commission